

CONNECTION

Reston ♦ Oak Hill Herndon ♦ Chantilly ♦ CENTRE VIEW

'Reston Baby' Promotes Reading from Birth

NEWS, PAGE 8



(From bottom left to top right) The Reston Reads Team: Dr. Elizabeth English, Roberta Gosling, Kathy Leatherwood, Delegate Ken Plum, Pat Fegi, and Carol Bradley.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Seen in TJ's Freshman Class

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PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

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Schools As a Political Football

BY KENNETH R. "KEN" PLUM
STATE DELEGATE (D-36)



COMMENTARY

When I graduated in January 1965 from the newly named Old Dominion College (now University) that had previously been the Norfolk Extension of William and Mary, I found the job market bleak for persons with history and political science majors. I could find a job, but I wanted one that would allow me to use the skills and knowledge I had gained in my dual majors. Teaching was a possibility, but I lacked the necessary credentials. My graduation with a master's degree in teaching social studies from the University of Virginia provided me with the credentials for teaching, and the internship associated with that program landed me a job teaching history and government in Fairfax County Public Schools.

In the master's program I learned about the discovery learning approach to teaching that was being demonstrated at Amherst College. The goal of the program was to equip learners with the tools of research and weighing evidence that would make them lifelong learners who would enjoy learning and be able to make informed decisions in the future.

As excited as I was about the opportunity to manage the learning of students and enjoy

the excitement they would experience as they discovered the processes of acquiring knowledge and skills, I had to recognize the fact that the State Department of Education's expectation for me was quite different. It was my first teaching job, and I was given a state written and approved textbook on the history and government of Virginia that I was supposed to use. The textbook, Cavalier Commonwealth, was written by a committee of academics whose content had to be approved by nine legislators on the Virginia History and Government Textbook Commission. The Textbook Commission came about in 1950 because of changes in public opinion on issues such as states' rights, desegregation of schools and what the establishment feared as federal intrusion in state affairs. The legislators read and edited the text of the book to be used in the schools to teach history and government to ensure that no ideas beyond those held by the establishment were taught to children.

I found the information in the book to be so offensive that I told the administrator to whom I reported that I could not honestly use it. There was agreement that I would not teach the "facts" in the book as they were written but rather use

them as a point of departure to research and discover a more balanced view of the state's history and government. I got permission to do so as more than half the students had failed the "trivial pursuit" approach of memorizing isolated bits of information to be given back on a test. I believe that most left my class enjoying a new subject and being equipped with tools they could use in the future.

I am greatly concerned that once again school programs are being politicized. The current controversy over "Critical Race Theory" is being used to stoke fear among parents who want to limit learning to their own ultra-conservative view of the world. That would not be good for our students or our society. We need to push back against this effort to make our school programs political footballs and ensure that our students can become the lifelong learners, scholars, and good citizens they can be.

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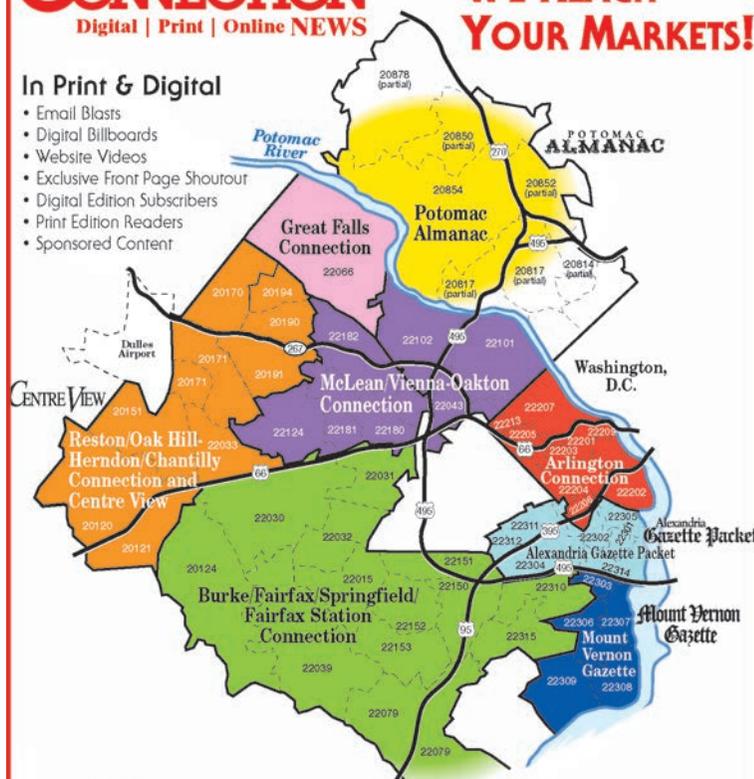
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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Seen in TJ's Freshman Class

In 2021, the U.S. News Best High Schools report ranked TJ the number one school nationwide for the second year running.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION



Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology



Students in their lab coats set to learn at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology.



Scott S. Brabrand, Superintendent Fairfax County Public Schools, describes the revised admission process for TJ.

— Scott S. Brabrand, Superintendent Fairfax County Public Schools

In 2021, the U.S. News Best High Schools report ranked TJ the number one school nationwide for the second year running. TJ offers a challenging, comprehensive college preparatory program, with research-based learning emphasizing STEM-related courses and activities. In addition, TJ offers a complete high school curriculum, fine arts and performing arts, and world languages. There are over 180 clubs and activities, according to FCPS. Previously, attending one

of the top three middle schools in Fairfax County, Carson, Longfellow, and Rocky Run Middle Schools, seemed to give students a better chance of attending TJ. Operating under the newly revised 2020-21 Eligibility Requirements for the In TJ's merit-based admissions application process, students were allocated a number to be identified, making it race, ethnicity, and gender blind. For the first time in ten years, every middle school in the Fairfax County Public School division is represented at TJ as seats in the Class of 2025 were allocated for the top 1.5 percent of applicants from every middle school's eighth-grade student population. Students from historically underrepresented schools increased to 30.73 percent versus 5.56 percent (2020-21).

According to TJ Admissions Data, students in the Class of 2025 are "high performers and are well prepared for TJ's academic rigor." The average GPA [Grade Point Average] for applicants was at 3.9 on the scale between 1.0 and 4.0, slightly higher this year than in the past five years. The average reported GPA, 3.9539, remained high for those offered admissions, in line with previous years.

The new TJ admissions process also resulted in "a significant increase in access to teaching for groups who have faced barriers to entry, including special education students, students eligible for free and reduced-price meals, and English Learners," said Brabrand.

FCPS staff increased outreach efforts to encourage students to apply, resulting in a 17 percent increase in enrollment applications, 3,034 applications versus 2,539 applications for SY2020-21.

THE CLASS OF 2025 represents greater diversity and inclusivity. According to FCPS: Black students increased from 1.23 percent (2020-21) to 7.09 percent. Hispanic students increased from 3.29 percent (2020-21) to 11.27 percent. Female students increased from 41.80 percent (2020-21) to 46.00 percent. White students increased from 17.70 percent (2020-21) to 22.36 percent.

The most significant increases occurred in the number of economically disadvantaged students [those eligible to receive reduced-price or free meals at school] from slightly greater than 0.5 percent (0.62 in 2020-21) to 25.09 percent. In addition, 2.36 percent of accepted students are special education students, and 7.09 percent of accepted students are English Language Learners. Asian students continue to constitute a majority of the class at 54.36 percent.

"As usual, all newly admitted students will have access to comprehensive support from school staff to ensure a smooth transition and a successful experience for every student enrolling," said Brabrand. "We want to be sure we are providing them the support so that they can maximize their talents."

"As usual, all newly admitted students will have access to comprehensive support from school staff to ensure a smooth transition and a successful experience for every student enrolling."

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Mentorship: include but not limited to Children's National Medical Center, NIH, MITRE Corp, Naval Research Lab, GMU, GWU, Smithsonian, Northrop Grumman, Georgetown University Medical Center

Possible course offerings senior year at Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology.

THE SITUATION was not new. Nearly a decade ago, "across all four grades TJ in 2009-2010 school year, approximately 1.78 percent of students were black, 2.84 percent of students were Hispanic, and 1.74 percent were poor," the Connection reported on June 26, 2012. "Fully 25 percent of students in Fairfax County are poor enough to qualify for free-or-reduced price meals. Do we believe poor students are less talented than students from wealthier families?"

According to Superintendent Scott S. Brabrand in a June 23 news release, "Last year, Fairfax County Public Schools moved to ensure increased access and opportunity to TJ for students with an aptitude and passion for STEM. The data around TJ's prospective freshmen class speaks volumes to the fact that when we truly center our work on equity, all of our students have an opportunity to shine."

According to Regulation 3355.14 from the Superintendent's Office on TJ Admissions, TJ is annually designated by the Virginia Department of Education as an academic-year regional governor's school for science and technology. It is under the sole direction and control of the Fairfax County School Board. Existing in the very diverse County of Fairfax, it serves select students who meet the eligibility requirements not only from Fairfax, including the City of Fairfax but four other Northern Virginia school divisions-Arlington County, Falls Church City, Loudoun County, and Prince William County.

'We've Been Doing God's Work with Our Hands'

King of Kings Lutheran Church celebrates 50 years.

By BONNIE HOBBS
THE CONNECTION

The past, present and future united during the 50th anniversary celebration of King of Kings Lutheran Church in Fair Oaks. The June 13 service and ceremony honored the former pastors, while acknowledging the current members, plus the church's new campus in Aldie.

It was also attended by the present congregation, as well as members who'd moved away and returned for this special event. Pam McGovern, a member since 1990, said, "It really is a true family – welcoming and nurturing. It's like a small town in a big area, with a feeling of community. I started attending when I was single and then got married here, and our children were baptized here. This church has always been supportive – and you need that in life."

With just 71 members, King of Kings held its first service in 1969 at Christ Presbyterian Church, later moving to Brookfield and Greenbriar West elementary schools. Ten years later, it relocated to a doublewide trailer; then in 1989, it built a ministry center and preschool at 4025 Kings Way. It expanded both its sanctuary and school in 2002 and now has 175 worshipping members.

Claudia and John DeBusk joined 48 years ago, moving away 18 years ago, but returning for the ceremony. "Pastor Bill Ridenhour knocked on doors in Greenbriar and Brookfield in the 1960s, saying, 'I'm starting a church,' and we just loved him," said Claudia. "It's always been family-oriented, and we still keep in touch with the members."

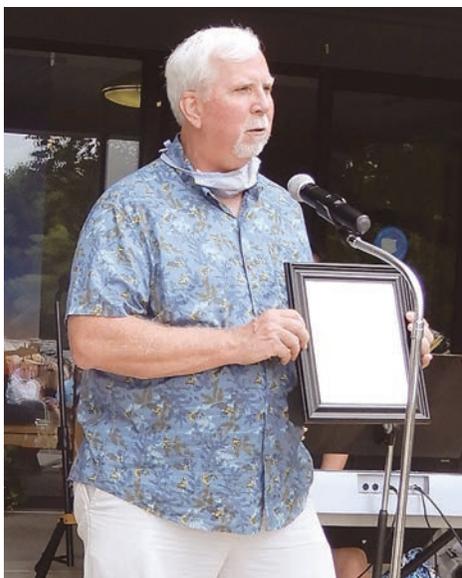
George Cusson, a 35-year member, said, "It's all about community. We do a lot of volunteer work in the community, such as Martha's Table, and get out and help others. There's a lot of energy here, and the future looks extremely bright. We're already reaching out into western Loudoun to expand our church presence."

He described the current pastor, the Rev. Lynn Miller, as "a person of integrity and honesty, with a giving personality, and a genuine, nice human being." As for the church, he said, "You come on Sunday with whatever you're feeling that day, but you always leave uplifted."

THE COMMEMORATIVE EVENT was both in-person, outdoors, and livestreamed. "It's so good to have everyone together," Miller told the congregation. "What a beautiful day we have to kick off our all-year, 50th anniversary celebration."

Then, leading a prayer, Cusson said, "We celebrate Your divine grace and mercy that's sustained us for the past 50 years. To You, oh, Lord, be the glory."

* Next, member Jim Nelson read a proclamation about the late pastor Ridenhour and presented it to his son, Carroll. It noted that Ridenhour was ordained in 1955 and served as King of Kings' first pastor for 20 years. He delivered his sermons from the heart, with



Carroll Ridenhour accepting the proclamation honoring his late father.

just a few words scribbled on his palm. Often described as a "gentle giant," he made hospital visits and was also known for his North Carolina barbecue. The proclamation said, "Pastor Bill was truly the driving force in establishing the King of Kings." Then, expressing its gratitude for all he'd done, the church conferred upon him the designation of "Pastor Emeritus."

"I know he would have been thrilled," said his son. "He liked engaging with people, and he'd be ecstatic to know that this church is doing as well as it is."

* Church member Linda Hewitt then read a proclamation giving the same designation to former pastor Geri Opsahl, who led King of Kings from 1992 until her retirement in 2001. The document said she "served our congregation with grace and compassion. She was small in stature, but huge in impact." Noting that "the words of her sermons echoed for some time," the church gave her the honorary title out of its "deep affection, respect and esteem" for her.

Health concerns prevented Opsahl from attending the ceremony, but Hewitt read a message from her. "My heart is with all of you, remembering our incredible years together," wrote Opsahl. "I'm humbled, honored and filled with gratefulness and joy to have had the privilege of serving this wonderful congregation."

"People who felt unworthy or left behind learned God cares for them. People who felt unacceptable found they were welcome in this place. People disappointed or hurt by life found a caring community. This church

PHOTOS BY BONNIE HOBBS/THE CONNECTION



Linda Hewitt



Pam McGovern looks on while the Rev. Mike Magwire addresses the crowd.

Accepting the honor, Magwire thanked the church and said it "has always preached the Gospel through words, actions and deeds."

MILLER, pastor there for six years now, told the attendees, "We're remembering our past,

into the present, for the sake of our future. We're grounded in God's love for all of us. We live in the present and in the Divine, who gives us a future filled with hope and promise. Here at King of Kings, we build an intentional family, care for and support one another. We're blessed that, for 50 years, we've been doing God's work with our hands. May God fill you with joy, peace and believing."

After the ceremony, she said, "It's a great joy and honor to celebrate the church's 50th anniversary and be part of the vision for the future here and in Aldie. God has richly blessed us to be a blessing in the community and throughout the world. And today, we wanted to honor the work of our previous pastors; we wouldn't be here if it wasn't for them"

"What's incredible is seeing all the relationships that have been nurtured and formed here, over 50 years, and carried forward through multiple generations," said Mission Pastor Garrett Wolf. "Some of the families that began this church have kids doing the same thing now to help us start our new church."

"Throughout the years, King of Kings has been a vital hub for people united in caring for their surrounding community," added Administrative Assistant Fran Crabtree. "It's a place for anyone and all ages to feel welcomed and serve alongside one another in love. Our mission is being a safe place for all to explore faith, live beyond labels and find a deeply rooted and faith-centered community."

Services are Sundays at 10 a.m. For more information, go to www.kofk.org or call 703-378-7272, ext. 221.

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(From left) are King of Kings' mission pastor, Garrett Wolf; current pastor, Lynn Miller; and former pastor, Mike Magwire, at the church's 50th anniversary celebration.

is a community of love and justice; so keep believing life is worth living, God is good and all will be well."

* Also designated "Pastor Emeritus" was the Rev. Michael Magwire, the church's pastor from 1990 until his 2012 retirement. McGovern read his proclamation calling Magwire "the people's pastor, full of life, and making all feel welcome." It also conveyed the King of Kings' gratitude and appreciation for all he'd done as its pastor."

Greater Traffic Volumes Coming with Future Comstock Mixed-Use Development

Ground-breaking held for Elden-Center Streets Intersection Improvements.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The critical \$1.4M reconstruction and signalization of the Elden-Center Streets Intersection Improvements began June 7. Mayor Sheila Olem, Councilmembers, and town staff joined in a ground-breaking ceremony for Project Number: 03-ST-00-0. Besides signalization, improvements include brick sidewalks, storm drainage, and the construction of duct banks for future undergrounding of utility improvements. The reconstruction and signalization are vital because of existing and anticipated increased traffic volumes at the intersection.

Comstock Herndon Venture, LC, and the Town of Herndon completed the land transfer of the 4.7-acre parcel at the Elden-Center Streets location in Dec. 2020. Comstock's planned redevelopment is the centerpiece of Herndon's revitalization of its historic downtown. Comstock razed buildings on the land



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

Scott Robinson-Director of Public Works, Cesar Casanova-Project Manager, Sean Regan-Herndon Town Councilmember, Mayor Sheila Olem, Signe Friedrichs-Herndon Town Councilmember, Pradip Dhakal-Herndon Town Councilmember, and Bill Ashton, Town Manager break ground for the much-anticipated Elden-Center Streets Intersection Improvements.

in April of 2020. Olem said in a statement that the town's cost of the \$1.4M project was approximately 10 percent of the total "thanks to our professional town staff."

Revenue streams for the improvement included funds generated by the Virginia General Assembly's approved final version of House Bill 2313 (HB 2313). "The additional revenues generated in the Northern Virginia Planning District are deposited into a Northern Virginia Transportation Authority Fund, with 30 percent of the funds being distributed to the member localities for use on transportation projects," according to Virginia's Legislative Information System.

Funds will support the duct bank construction for future undergrounding of utilities, according to the Town of Herndon FY2021-FY2026 Capital Improvement Program. As of June 7, the Town website reported VDOT Revenue Sharing added \$775,000 in financing sources. According to Town Manager Bill Ashton, the project came in under budget by \$400,000.

Pandemic-Delayed Ribbon Cutting Held

Town officials, Chamber members, and guests welcome District Floor Depot to Herndon.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION



PHOTO BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION

The red ceremonial Grand Opening Ribbon flutters to the ground after (Center) Managing Partner of District Floor Depot Yusef Mehmetoglu and Town of Herndon Mayor Sheila Olem cut it, symbolizing the opening of business after its soft-opening fall of 2020.

business for many years here, and we appreciate all the help and support today with the grand opening," he said.

Mayor Olem said that District Floor Depot was an exciting business to have in the town. "I know that people in Herndon are constantly redoing their housing instead of moving...We welcome you and wish you lots of success." A reception followed with door prizes.

The flooring company has over 100 5-star reviews across Google, Facebook, Yelp, and Houzz, according to Mehmetoglu, and can be reached by email at store003@districtfloordepot.com or phone at 703-436-1050.

District Floor Depot celebrated the Ceremonial Grand Opening of its third and newest branch at 1051 Elden Street, Herndon, with a ribbon cutting ceremony held Thursday, June 23, that was supposed to happen over a year ago. "Our store opening got delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic...We had our soft opening on Monday, Oct. 12, 2020," said Managing Partner Yusef Mehmetoglu. "[But] we had to cancel the ribbon cutting to comply with CDC social distance guidelines."

The store offers customers mill-direct pricing and installation of hard surface flooring such as traditional, distressed, reclaimed, and exotic hardwoods, luxury resilience vinyl, bamboo, and cork flooring. Mehmetoglu said that initially, they planned to open the Herndon location in April of 2020.

With Town of Herndon Mayor Sheila Olem, town staff, members of the Dulles Regional Chamber of Commerce, including Joe Martin President & CEO, employees, and guests present, Mehmetoglu thanked everyone for their support and welcomed them to the town "with open arms." "We look forward to doing

Fair Lakes Townhouse Fire Displaces Four

Fire officials say an early morning fire in Fair Lakes displaced four people and caused an estimated \$463,375 in damages to the home involved. The blaze occurred June 20, around 8:38 a.m., in the 4200 block of Zouave Lane.

Responding units from both the Fairfax County and City of Fairfax Fire and Rescue departments saw a column of black smoke as they approached the scene. They then discovered a three-story, end-unit townhouse with a large volume of fire extending from the second floor and through the roof. A second alarm was immediately sounded.

Crews quickly brought the fire under control. No civilians were injured, but one firefighter was transported to the hospital for evaluation of non-life-threatening injuries. None of the occupants were home at the time of the fire. It was reported by a neighbor who saw black smoke and flames coming from the house.



FAIRFAX COUNTY FIRE & RESCUE DEPT
Firefighters climbing up into the building

Fire investigators determined that the fire was accidental and started on the second-floor deck. They say it was caused by the improper disposal of rags soaked with an oil wood stain. Two additional townhomes sustained external damage due to heat exposure.

— BONNIE HOBBS

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THE CONNECTION
NEWSPAPERS

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Really?

To the Editor:

I take issue with the page 3 sub-headline "Primary voters select candidates with gender and racial diversity but lacking in regional balance." (Connection, June 16-22, 2021).

Really?

Terry McAuliffe is a white male. Mark Herring is a white male.

Only Hala Ayala -- 1 of the 3 candidates on the Democratic statewide ticket -- is a woman of color.

CALENDAR

FOURTH OF JULY FIREWORKS

In Virginia, there are lots of great places to view fireworks, at the National Mall in Washington, hosted by the National Park Service: George Washington Memorial Parkway, including U.S. Marine Corps War Memorial, Netherlands Carillon grounds, Lyndon Baines Johnson Memorial Grove, Gravelly Point Park, and along the Mount Vernon Trail from the 14th Street Bridge to Theodore Roosevelt Island. Parking is allowed in designated parking areas only. City of Fairfax -- Saturday, July 3 - Independence Day celebrations will start with a parade at 4100 Chain Bridge Road, Fairfax at 10 a.m. The parade loops around downtown Fairfax, along Chain Bridge Road, Main Street, University Drive and Armstrong Street.

On July 4, an evening show will kick off at 6:30 p.m. with on-stage entertainment followed by a spectacular fireworks display. Fairfax High School, 3501 Lion Run.

Herndon - July 4 at 9:30 p.m. Fireworks launched from the Herndon Centennial Golf Course. Viewing opportunities at Bready Park, 814 Ferndale Ave. with access for parking and field seating opening no earlier than 8 p.m. There will be no food concessions or entertainment this year.

Lorton - July 2nd, Workhouse Arts Center Fireworks - 5-10 p.m. (VIP Access) 6-10 p.m. (Drive In Tail Gate Access). Workhouse Arts Center Campus, 9518 Workhouse Way, Lorton. Phone: (703) 584-2986.

Lake Fairfax Park - July 3 - 9:15 p.m. 1400 Lake Fairfax Dr., Reston, VA 20190. Park admission is free, but advance tickets cost \$10 per car; day-of tickets may be purchased at the park for \$15 per car. Phone: 703-471-5415.

Mount Vernon. -This event is sold out - Independence Fireworks at George Washington's Mount Vernon: June 25 to 26, 6 p.m. to 9:45 p.m.

FRIDAY/JULY 2

Friday Night Live. At Herndon Town Green, Herndon. Popular free outdoor concert series returns to regular performances. This will be the 27th season for the concert series which is produced by the Herndon Chamber of Commerce.

Schedule

July 2 -- Under the Covers;
July 9 -- Turtle Recall;
July 16 -- The Rockets;
July 23 -- Herr Metal + Dr FU;
July 30 -- Kristen and the Noise;
Aug 6 -- Social Call;
Aug 13 -- It's All Good;
Aug 20 -- JunkFood;
Aug 27 -- All-Star Band;
Sept 3 -- Shake the Room;
Sept 10 -- Keeton + 8 Track Jones;
Sept 17 -- The Reflex;
Sept 24 -- Screaming Mönkeys.

Friday Night Live! is produced by the Herndon Chamber of Commerce and brought to you by its title sponsor Volkswagen Group of America.

WOLF TRAP SCHEDULE

July 1 - Fifty Years Together: A Celebration of Wolf Trap with National Symphony Orchestra, JoAnn Falletta (conductor), Cynthia Erivo

How do you see that as selecting a gender- and racially-diverse set of candidates?

The Republican candidates also have white males on their ticket for Governor and Attorney General, and a woman of color for Lt. Governor. This basically takes gender and race completely out of the equation for this fall's election. Both tickets are equally gender-diverse and racially-diverse.

Debra Steppel
Reston

(vocalist), Christine Goerke (soprano), Joyce Yang (piano)
July 2 + 3 - Wolf Trap Opera: Sondheim "Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet" in Concert with National Symphony Orchestra, Roberto Kalb (conductor)
July 7 - Watchhouse (formerly Mandolin Orange)
July 8 + 9 - Beethoven and Bologne with National Symphony Orchestra, Jonathan Heyward (conductor), Francesco Dego (violin)
July 10 - Aria Jukebox, The Audience Gets to Choose! (streaming online beginning July 10)
July 10 + 11 - Max Weinberg's Jukebox
Visit www.wolftrap.org for tickets. By phone at 877.WOLFTRAP

JULY 4

The McLean Community Center's 4th of July Celebration is holding a drive-thru celebration that will be safe and fun for families. The event will be held from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. and features music played by a DJ, ice cream and free giveaways. Admission is free; registration is required. MCC is located at 1234 Ingleside Ave. Dranesville Small District 1 A residents can sign up for one of three convenient, hour-long timeslots: 11 a.m.-12 noon; Noon-1 p.m. and 1-2 p.m. Registration times are for personal vehicles only. One registration per vehicle. Large passenger vans and busses will not be permitted. To register or for more information, visit, www.mcleancenter.org/special-events or call 703-790-0123, TTY: 711.

JULY 4 FIREWORKS

In Herndon. 8 - 10 p.m. At Bready Park, 814 Ferndale Ave, Herndon. This year the event is scaled back and will feature a fireworks display only. The fireworks will begin at 9:30 p.m. Event parking and access to Bready Park will open at 8:00 p.m. Rain date, fireworks will be held on Monday, July 5, 9:30 p.m. Free admission and
Parking. Visit the website: <https://www.herdon-va.gov/recreation/special-events/4th-of-july>

SUNDAY/JULY 4

Trailblazers 5K Fun/Run. 8 a.m. At Great Falls Library Ballfield, 9830 Georgetown Pike, Great Falls. Great Falls Trailblazers are sponsoring the free annual 5 K Fun/Run. All ages are welcome. Sign up at the web site www.GreatFallsTrailblazers.org.

FIREWORKS AT LAKE FAIRFAX

Fireworks Return to Lake Fairfax. Lake Fairfax will host fireworks on Saturday, July 3, 2021, bringing back this community celebration after a pandemic-driven cancellation last year. This year's event will take place the day before the national holiday - on Saturday, July 3. Tickets can be purchased online through 11:59 p.m. on July 2. Advance tickets are available for \$10 per car; day-of tickets may be purchased at the park for \$15 per car. The fireworks will be launched at dark which is usually shortly after 9 p.m. Attendees should arrive by 8 p.m. to ensure sufficient time to park and find a spot to watch the show.

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And the "Scancer" Is ...



By KENNETH B. LOURIE

... stable, with a side of shrinkage, however modest. No jeopardy here, final or otherwise. Simply more of the same here, but hardly ho hum. A status quo with which I am fond of writing: I can live. Promises and guarantees left the building on that fateful day in late February, 2009 when an oncologist who I had previously never met summarized my condition and identified it as stage IV, non small cell lung cancer. A "terminal" disease if there ever was one, and of course there are many. And along with that bombshell came the excruciatingly unpopular prognosis: "13 months to two years." I was 54 and a half with no history of cancer in my immediate family.

Much has happened and many medications prescribed since I infused my initial chemotherapy back in early March, 2009. Most of which you regular readers know. If you recall anything from my 12 years of weekly cancer columns, it is that regular diagnostic scans: CT scans, bone scans, P.E.T. scans and MRIs have been recurring nightmares. Every three months, I am scheduled for some type of scan, sometimes more than one ("BOGO, I call it) which based on its findings will determine my subsequent course of treatment. If the results are encouraging, a change in my treatment is unlikely. If however, tumors are growing, newly appearing or spreading then it's "Katy bar the door," as we say in New England. Which means, hang onto your hat, among other things, as a new health situation presents, and one without an automatic solution. After years of conversations with my oncologist, I've learned: The best one can hope for is a definite maybe. It's this unpredictability which fills my day - and night.

Nevertheless, my life has gone on way longer than my oncologist anticipated. It may be because I was misdiagnosed (as a Georgetown Cancer Center oncologist suggested) and had a slow moving form of papillary thyroid cancer rather than an aggressive form of lung cancer which kills more often than it cures. Or, I may simply be my oncologist's "third miracle," as he's fond of saying. Presumably my positive attitude and good humor about my circumstances in conjunction with the many supplements I ingest with alkaline water exclusively have contributed to my unexpected survival. Regardless, as Frankenstein might have said: "I'm alive."

As scary as Frankenstein, Dracula or Lon Chaney ever was, a cancer diagnosis tops them all. Being told by a doctor you have never met that you have two years to live, at best, is as you might imagine, nearly impossible to process. It's not exactly what you had planned on or expected hearing when you sat in the doctor's office. Yet, as Ralph Edwards used to say; "This is your life." And as many others have said: "You're stuck with it." And as grim as you feel about your future, this is no fairy tale. As always, reality beats make-believe any day, and in this instance, not in a good way.

But I am in a good way. I am still typing, among other activities. And after having just received a "looks good" comment from my oncologist concerning this week's CT and bone scan, my warranty has been extended for another 90 days, when the results of my next quarterly scan will be emailed. Until then, I am in high cotton. To say I'm not worried is of course naive, but in the interim, between scans, I am in "the rocking chair, good buddy," to invoke a familiar CB-ism. This is how many cancer patients live: from one scan to the next. It's not ideal, but it is a living, and one for which I'm extremely grateful and fortunate to still have. It may not have been the life I expected, but I'm glad to live it nonetheless.

Kenny Lourie is an Advertising Representative for The Potomac Almanac & The Connection Newspapers.

‘Reston Baby’ Promotes Reading from Birth

Reston Historic Trust shepherds and cheerleads community-collaborated project.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

Reston Historic Trust celebrated the release of its children’s board book, “Reston Baby” (2021), art by Molly Bergin, published by duopress, by throwing a launch party on Tuesday, June 15, at its museum located at 1639 Washington Plaza. The 22-page bilingual children’s book, written in English and Spanish, values diversity and encourages parents to read to their children from birth and keep reading throughout childhood. Project founder Dr. Elizabeth English is a former principal of Sunrise Valley Elementary School in Reston and conceived the idea for the book on April 10, 2020.

“I’m going to tell you a little secret about myself,” English said, addressing the crowd at the book launch. “I’ve never had an original idea in my entire life. But I recognize really great ideas.” English spoke of hearing the head librarian at Roanoke City talk about a book they created and distributed for free to all the newborns at a local hospital [Carilion Clinic’s Roanoke Memorial Hospital]. She said if Roanoke could do it, so could Reston.

According to English, she is a collaborator, “really good at putting together teams of people who can get things done.” She described the newly found group, Reston Reads.

ENGLISH tapped Pat Fegi, retired language arts coordinator, Carol Bradley, former Principal of Terraset Elementary, Delegate Ken Plum “who knows everybody and everything,” and Kathy Leatherwood, a multi-talented ESL teacher, also wrote the song “Having Fun in Reston” to accompany the book. In addition, English brought on board Kim Siegel, and Roberta Gosling, who she knew was “a mover and shaker... but... didn’t know the extent of it.”

“We met on April 10 [2020] for the very first time, virtually of course... [So, this] is an incredible 360 degree-cycle moment for me, to watch something come together that impacts the community that I love so dearly,” English said.

Virginia Delegate Ken Plum (D-36) said that one thing he loved about the community was “how we come together...It’s a hallmark of what we’re about, and it’s appropriate that this book came about that way too.”

According to Irene Williford, Chief Nursing Officer at Reston Hospital, who attended the book launch, every baby born at Reston Hospital Center will receive a “Reston Baby” board book and pamphlet on reading as part of their Newborn Parents Packet before leaving the hospital. Williford said that Reston Hospital Center has “about 200 deliveries a month.” “We are proud to be a part of the project...and... we want to thank you for allowing us to be part of it,” Williford said.

Artist Molly Bergin used a limited palette of earth tone and pastel colors for “Reston Baby.” She textured backgrounds to bring forward her drawings of key-line, block-colored landmarks, babies, children, and adults paired to the playful text. Showcasing a snapshot of Reston, Bergin drew fun events Reston children love, “festivals, parades, concerts, and celebrations,” and what they love to do, “bike, run, fish, play, and skate.” In addition, the study little board book,



Delegate Ken Plum (D-36) and Roberta Gosling at the launch of the board book “Reston Baby.” Screen image in the photo shows “Reston Baby” delivered to a family on June 3, 2021, at Reston Hospital Center.



(From right) From Reston Hospital Center part of the HCA Virginia Health System, Todd McGovern, Director, Marketing & Communications and Shannon Longendyke, Maternity, Birth Navigator.

“nontoxic” printed, described a “caring community that loves children ... [where they] “learn to be kind and to share.”

Roberta Gosling, lead fundraiser for the project explained the book’s distribution in greater detail. She said when staff at Reston Hospital Center teach new parents how to wash and diaper their new baby; they will have “Reston Baby” right there. “This is one of the first things that all of the babies in Reston are going to see. So, it’s going to be a really big deal.”

Gosling went on to say that “nothing happens in Reston, without everybody in Reston.”

SPONSOR ORGANIZATIONS that funded the \$15,000 printing costs for the first 4000 copies of “Reston Baby” are Reston Community Center, Reston Town Center Association, Reston Association, Reston Museum, Friends of Reston, Friends of the Reston Regional Library, and Reston Hospital Center HCA Virginia Health System. English said, “When we get down to a small quantity, we’ll be knocking on doors again.”

“Reston Baby” (2021), published by duopress, is available for sale online and at the Reston Historic Trust & Museum for \$10. Funds support future printings.

PHOTOS BY MERCIA HOBSON/THE CONNECTION



The “Cathedral Brass of Vienna Presbyterian Church” performs on the Arts Herndon Lawn Stage, part of the Arts Herndon’s World Music Series.

Vienna Cathedral Brass Debuts in Herndon

Vienna ensemble delivers versatility and virtuosity.

BY MERCIA HOBSON
THE CONNECTION

The Cathedral Brass of Vienna Presbyterian Church performed a free outdoor concert titled “Americans We” at 7 p.m. on the Arts Herndon Lawn Stage, located adjacent to its arts center in the heart of the historic downtown district. Arts Herndon produced the program under its grant-funded World Music Series.

Conductor Dr. Dereck Scott brought the high-energy music of Cathedral Brass with guest artist Graham Breedlove to Herndon. Together, the brass and percussion ensemble performed classical, jazz, and popular favorites.

According to Joanna Ormesher, President and Chief Executive Officer of Arts Herndon, featured works included Breedlove’s New Orleans jazz arrangement of the gospel hymn “Precious Lord, Take My Hand,” Chicago’s “25 or 6 to 4,” Morton

Gould’s “American Salute,” and John Williams’ “Swing, Swing, Swing” from the movie “1941.”

“The Cathedral Brass was thrilled to have the opportunity to perform in Herndon on Friday. It’s been fantastic to share live music with people again, and we are eager to continue this partnership well into the future,” said Scott.

“Quin Tango - an Argentine Tango delight, Shepherd’s Pie Irish Ceili Band, and “Americans We” with Cathedral Brass of Vienna this past weekend have been delighting Herndon audiences on the Arts Herndon Lawn Stage for the past month. I’m thrilled with the response, and we are now looking to continuing the series on Saturday evenings during the summer,” said Ormesher.

Founded in 1983 by Ray and Sharyl Abell, the Cathedral Brass is under the direction of Dr. Dereck Scott. For more information, visit www.cathedral-brass.org or contact the.cathedral.brass@gmail.com.



Joanne Ormesher, CEO and President of Arts Herndon and others in the audience show their appreciation.